

Independent Claims 1 and 13:

Of the nineteen claims currently pending in the present application, Claims 1 and 13 are independent in nature, with the remaining claims being dependent upon respective ones of these independent claims. In each of independent Claims 1 and 13, the end connector is described as comprising the following components:

- 1) a main body defining an arcuate body engagement surface;
- 2) at least two arms attached to the main body, each of the arms defining an arcuate arm engagement surface which is substantially continuous with the body engagement surface; and
- 3) at least one attachment finger attached to and extending from the main body, the attachment finger being extensible into the interior cavity of the plank.

Additionally, in each of Claims 1 and 13, the body and arm engagement surfaces are described as being sized and configured to be cooperatively engageable to a scaffolding frame.

As indicated above, in the subject Office Action, independent Claims 1 and 13 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. Section 102(b) as purportedly being clearly anticipated by the Farner reference. The Examiner's argument with regard to the applicability of the teachings of the Farner reference to Applicant's invention as described in Claims 1 and 13 is limited to the cursory statement that "Farmer (sic) shows an end connector 700 with a finger 712, and a plank 800." Applicant respectfully submits that the Section 102(b) rejection of independent Claims 1 and 13 based on the Farner reference is inappropriate for the reasons that will be discussed in more detail below.

Independent Claims 1 and 13 as Originally Filed are not Anticipated by the Farner Reference:

The Farner reference discloses different embodiments of a scaffold platform. It appears from the Office Action that the embodiment which the Examiner deems to be the most pertinent to Claims 1 and 13 is that which is shown in Figures 7 and 8 of the Farner

reference. In this particular embodiment, at least one end cap 700 is configured to be engageable to one end of a scaffold platform 800. As shown in Figures 7 and 8 of the Farner reference and clearly described therein, the end connector 700 includes a spaced pair of side beams 704 which are interconnected by a cross beam 706. Extending between the side beams 704 is a handle 708. Also attached to and extending between the side beams 704 is a mounting hook 710. It appears from the disclosure of the Farner reference that the mounting hook 710 is received into matching half circles which are pre-cut into the side beams 704 and secured within such half circles through the use of an epoxy (see Farner specification, column 7, lines 1-4; column 6, lines 41-60).

As is further disclosed in the Farner reference, the cross beam 706 of the end cap 700 includes slots 702, the configurations of which are complimentary to and adapted to receive respective ones of the center beam 802 and side beams 808 of the scaffold platform 800.

Applicant respectfully submits that the structural attributes of the end cap 700 described in the Farner reference completely fail to satisfy those limitations in Claims 1 and 13 highlighted above. In the Office Action, the Examiner appears to construe the cross beam 706 as satisfying the attachment finger element recited in Claims 1 and 13, since the attaching end 712 of the end cap 700 is actually defined by the cross beam 706. However, if the cross beam 706 is relied upon to satisfy the attachment finger element of Claims 1 and 13, the end cap 700 lacks the main body element of Claims 1 and 13 since the side beams 704 extend from the cross beam 706. If, on the other hand, an attempt is made to construe the cross beam 706 as the main body element of Claims 1 and 13, the end cap 700 lacks the attachment finger element of Claims 1 and 13 which is described as being attached to and extending from the main body. Simply stated, the cross beam 706 cannot properly be relied upon to satisfy *both* the main body and attachment finger elements of Claims 1 and 13. If the cross beam 706 is an attachment finger as the Examiner appears to assert, there is no main body in the end connector 700. If the cross beam 706 satisfies the main body element of Claims 1 and 13, there is no attachment finger in the end connector 700.

Moreover, even if the cross beam 706 is construed to satisfy the main body element of Claims 1 and 13, there is clearly no teaching or suggestion whatsoever in the Farner reference regarding the inclusion of an arcuate body engagement surface within the cross

beam 706 which is sized and configured to be cooperatively engageable to a scaffolding frame.

The end cap 700 of the Farner reference also fails to satisfy Claims 1 and 13 for other reasons as well. More particularly, neither of the side beams 704, even if construed to satisfy the arms feature in Claims 1 and 13, includes an arcuate arm engagement surface which is sized and configured to be cooperatively engageable to the scaffolding frame. Rather, as indicated above, the mounting hook 710 which is adhesively secured to matching half circle pre-cuts in the side beams 704 is the structure of the end connector 700 engageable to a scaffolding frame. Even assuming, arguendo, that the pre-cut half circles of the side beams 704 satisfy the arm engagement surface feature recited in Claims 1 and 13, such engagement surfaces are clearly not substantially continuous with an arcuate body engagement surface since, as indicated above, there is absolutely no teaching or suggestion in the Farner reference regarding any type of engagement surface, arcuate or otherwise, which is formed within the cross beam 706 and adapted to be engageable to a scaffolding frame.

In Applicant's invention, the advantages attendant to having the scaffolding frame abutted not only against the arm engagement surfaces, but the body engagement surface as well, is described in Paragraph [0052]. Thus, despite the arms of the end connector described in Claims 1 and 13 being nestable between the arms of a corresponding end connector of another scaffold plank assembly, such adjacent scaffold plank assemblies are not susceptible to rocking or tipping when a downward force is applied to the longitudinal edges thereof due to the body engagement surfaces of the interlocked end connectors being firmly abutted against a common segment of the scaffolding frame.

Based on the foregoing, Applicant respectfully submits that independent Claims 1 and 13 in their current form are clearly not anticipated by the Farner reference, and are in condition for allowance. Additionally, Applicant respectfully submits that Claims 2-12 and 14-19 are also in condition for allowance as being dependent upon respective allowable base claims.

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On the basis of the foregoing, Applicant respectfully submits that the stated grounds of rejection have been overcome, and that Claims 1-19 are in condition for allowance. An early Notice of Allowance is therefore respectfully requested.

If any additional fee is required, please charge Deposit Account Number 19-4330.

Respectfully submitted,

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